I. Executive Summary

Introduction

This report summarizes the final results of the State Highway 39 (SH-39)/US Highway 26 (US-26) Corridor planning process and presents recommendations regarding the management and development of the future corridor transportation system.

The study area was comprised of two halves. The north corridor area consisted of the 4.5-mile segment of US Highway 26 between Moreland Rd. and the Interstate 15 (I-15) northbound ramps in city of Blackfoot and a 17.6-mile segment of SH-39 between Sage Rd. and US-26. The south corridor area included an 8.1-mile segment of SH-39 that starts at the intersection of SH-39 (I-86B)/Pocatello Ave. in American Falls and continues to North Pleasant Valley Rd. Both corridor areas extended roughly one-half mile on either side of the highway.

US-26 provides connections between Blackfoot and Atomic City and Arco to the west, as well as the major intersecting highways of I-15, SH-39, and US Highway 20 near Atomic City. Between Blackfoot and American Falls, SH-39 serves the rural communities of Riverside, Pingree, Springfield, and Aberdeen, connecting with I-86 in American Falls and US-26 to the west of Blackfoot. Due to the rural character of the study area, there is no transit service. Bicycle and pedestrian facilities are limited, with a multi-use path in the vicinity of the SH-39/Bridge St. intersection near Blackfoot and another in American Falls near the intersection of SH-39/Ft. Hall Ave./Marina Rd. Sidewalks are located in American Falls adjacent to SH-39 between Idaho St. and Lamb-Weston Rd. Other transportation modes within or nearby the study area include several Union Pacific rail lines, two municipal airports, several high voltage transmission and telecommunications lines, and the navigable waterway of American Falls Reservoir.

The study was organized according to the following major tasks:

I. Identification of Existing Transportation, Land Use, and Environmental Conditions
II. Identification of Future Transportation and Land Use Conditions
III. Establishment of Corridor Goals and Objectives
IV. Development of Management Strategies and Improvement Options
V. Identification of Recommended Management Strategies and Improvements
VI. Preparation of Corridor Plan Document

Public Involvement

The public involvement program was designed to provide a framework to create a collaborative environment that encouraged input and participation by local stakeholders. The goal was to ensure the corridor plan would address all of the issues and would have broad community understanding and support.

Some of the key issues identified through the public involvement program were:

- Need for widening of the two-lane section of US-26 to the west of Bond Rd.;
- Need for widening of SH-39 between Wilson Rd./Riverside and US-26;
- Difficult to access US-26 and SH-39 at some intersections because of the lack of gaps in the traffic stream;
- Need for turn lanes at a number of intersections;
- Conflicts between trucks and farm equipment and general traffic;
- Conflicts between school buses and general traffic;
- Blowing, drifting snow across the highway creates difficult driving conditions at some locations;
- Speed limits are too high in some areas;
- Stop signs are difficult to see at several intersections;
- Drivers make rolling stops through intersections;
- Poor sight distance at some intersections; and
- Skewed intersection angles.

The program was integrated into the corridor planning process and designed to solicit input at key steps.

Corridor Planning Process	Public Involvement Program
Issue Identification	Stakeholder Interviews Public Open House #1 Task Force and TAC meeting
Existing Conditions	Joint Bingham County and Power County Transportation Coalition Meeting
Existing and Future Conditions Corridor Purpose and Goals Preliminary Strategy and Improvement Options	Newsletter #1 Public Open House #2 Bingham County Transportation Coalition Meeting
Recommended Strategy and Options	Newsletter #2 Public Open House #3 Joint Bingham County and Power County Transportation Coalition Meeting

Corridor Planning Process	Public Involvement Program
Draft Corridor Plan	Joint Bingham County and Power County Transportation Coalition review

Initially, two advisory groups were established to review and comment on the work products at key decision points. A **Technical Advisory Committee** (TAC) consisted of county and city planning and public works staff, federal and state resource agency staff, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) representatives, and ITD staff. A **Task Force** was formed of locally elected and appointed officials and other community organizations. After an initial kick-off meeting with the TAC and Task Force, it was decided to use the **Bingham County and Power County Transportation Coalitions** as the advisory group instead because there was a large amount of overlap between the members of each group. Also, it was believed that attendance would be higher at the regularly scheduled coalition meetings, rather than inviting participants to separate, additional meetings.

As part of the issue identification phase of the SH-39/US-26 Corridor Plan, a series of fifteen (15) stakeholder interviews were conducted in-person and by telephone in March, 2004. The purpose of the interviews was to gain local insight and experience with the current conditions and problems along the corridors.

The core opportunity for public participation in the corridor planning process was three public meetings. The meetings were held in an open house format to present and discuss issues and the major findings of the corridor planning effort. The open house format included individual topic displays, with ITD and the consultant team staff on hand to answer questions. The displays were supported by informational handouts and feedback questionnaires. The following public meetings were held:

Open house #1 (May 19 and 20, 2004)

- Announce the start of the study;
- Explain the study process and schedule;
- Provide information about opportunities and format for public input; and
- Identify corridor issues.

Open house #2 (January 18 and 19, 2005)

- Review existing and future conditions;
- Review land use and socio-economic profile;
- Review environmental scan; and
- Review preliminary improvement options.

Open house #3 (May 23, 2006)

- Review recommended improvement options.

Newsletters were the primary vehicle for summarizing the technical information and announcing upcoming public meetings. The newsletters were distributed through a combination of direct mail and drop-off points (such as government offices, community centers, libraries, and schools). In addition, media releases and newspaper advertisements were used to announce upcoming public meetings.

A website was used to post project updates, meeting announcements and summaries, technical reports, maps, and newsletters for downloading. Electronic files of all work products and reports were produced for posting on the website.

Purpose and Need

The purpose of the SH-39 and US-26 transportation corridors is to provide transportation facilities for a broad range of current and future travel demands. Examples of these demands include serving the needs of travelers who use the corridors for both regional and long-distance through-travel; serving the needs of residents and communities along and near the corridor that rely on the corridor for commuting, conducting community service activities, and carrying out the other routine activities of daily life and work; and serving the significant amount of traffic generated by the local agricultural industry (truck, farm equipment, and other vehicles).

It is intended that the corridors should accommodate many modes of travel; both motorized and non-motorized, and that these transportation facilities and services should be provided in as efficient, economical, safe, equitable, and environmentally-conserving a manner as can reasonably be achieved through adherence to accepted standards, requirements of the law and cooperation with elected officials, the public, and other agencies.

The purpose of the corridor plan is to determine existing and future needs, identify and analyze alternate management practices and project improvements, and to adopt recommended management strategies and improvements for all transportation modes in order to address the identified existing and future transportation needs that are forecasted to develop in the next 20-year time period.

The need for the corridor plan is based on the expected growth within the study area, and the requirement to plan for its orderly accommodation in all modes of transportation. The highest annual average daily traffic (AADT) volumes occur near Blackfoot, with between 8,000 and 10,000 vehicles per day (vpd) along SH-39 and over 16,000 vpd along

US-26. For the remainder of the north corridor area and in the south corridor area, volumes are generally in the range of 2,000 – 6,000 vpd. Because of the large component of agricultural traffic carried on SH-39 during the peak harvest season in September and October, there is significant seasonal variation in average daily traffic volumes at certain locations, particularly to the south of Rockford and in the south corridor area, where harvest season volumes are 40 – 50% higher than those in the winter months of January and February.

Future traffic growth rates along US-26 were estimated to be as high as 50% over the next 20 years. Along SH-39 in the north corridor area, growth rates over the next 20 years will generally range from between 30% - 50%. Traffic is also expected to grow within the south corridor area, but more slowly.

Recommendations

The recommendations listed below are based on the study findings as well as input received from the Bingham and Power County Transportation Coalitions, ITD Management Team, and members of the public.

1. Incorporate the recommended improvements described in Section VI. into future ITD STIPs.
2. Implement the recommended improvements as resources allow.
3. Obtain funding for the recommended improvements from all available existing and potential future funding sources.
4. Minimize the capital cost of transportation facilities, including the preservation of rights-of-way prior to project development.
5. Conduct more detailed feasibility and design studies as needed prior to implementation of the recommended improvements.
6. Implement the recommended improvements in a manner that avoids or minimizes:
    - Adverse impacts to the natural environment;
    - Land use displacements;
    - Impacts to historic, cultural, and institutional resources; and
    - Right-of-way needs.
7. Accommodate alternative mode improvements, such as bicycle, pedestrian, and public transportation facilities, within roadway improvements whenever possible.
8. Avoid the installation of traffic signals in rural areas wherever possible.
9. Plan and control access to US-26 and SH-39 for both new and existing uses according to:

- IDAPA 39.03.42, titled "Rules Governing Highway Right-of-Way Encroachments on State Rights-of-Way
- Administrative Policy A-12-01, titled "State Highway Access Control"
- "Access Management: Standards and Procedures for Highway Right-of-Way Encroachments"

10. Develop access management plans for US-26 and the portion of SH-39 extending from Pine Rd. to US-26. The plans should consist of a report and map establishing desired access outcomes that address both existing and potential future access problems. It should include detailed analyses of existing land use and traffic conditions, roadway geometrics, and site access that can be used for the development and evaluation of access alternatives.
11. Establish interagency agreements to coordinate land development and access management and define the roles and responsibilities of all involved agencies.
12. Construct pedestrian facilities where warranted at points of development such as rural communities or local businesses.
13. Consider impacts to the transportation system when reviewing land use plan amendments, rezones, and development proposals.
14. Update the corridor plan as conditions change or at least every five years.

Recommended Improvements

The identification of short- and long-range improvements followed a structured process. In the first step, preliminary improvement options were developed to address each of the transportation deficiencies. The preliminary improvement options were reviewed by the ITD Management Team for reasonableness and consistency with ITD policies.

Following this, the options were evaluated and those that were determined to be the most appropriate and potentially effective were identified as draft recommended improvement options. The draft recommended improvement options were reviewed by the Management Team and then presented for discussion with the Bingham County and Power County Transportation Coalitions and members of the public. The input received was incorporated by the Management Team in determining the final recommended improvements.

Some of the more important recommended improvements are summarized in the table below.

Summary of Recommended Improvements

Location	Improvement
US Highway 26 Moreland Rd. – I-15 NB Ramps	
Short-Range Improvements	
Parks Rd./Porterville Rd. to Beginning of 4-Lane Section	Widen to four lanes with traversable median.
Danskin Canal Bridge	Widen bridge.
W. Collins Siding Rd.	Realign south leg of intersection (W. Collins Siding Rd.).
Groveland Rd.	1. Close south leg of intersection. 2. Convert existing WB left-turn lane to refuge/acceleration lane for southbound left-turning vehicles.
Trego Canal Bridge	Widen bridge.
Lemhi Rd., Clark Rd., Bond Rd., Pioneer Rd., W. Collins Siding Rd., and Worthen Rd.	Add left- and/or right-turn lanes.
Long-Range Improvements	
Moreland Rd. to Parks Rd./ Porterville Rd.	Widen to four lanes with traversable median.
Parks Rd./Porterville Rd.	1. Realign intersection. 2. Install median to allow two-stage crossing maneuvers.
Clark Rd.	Install median to allow two-stage crossing maneuvers.
Bond Rd., Pioneer Rd.	1. Create new combined intersection. 2. Widen median at new intersection to allow two-stage crossing maneuvers.
I-86B (American Falls) Pocatello Ave. – Idaho St.	
Short-Range Improvements	
Hillcrest Ave.	1. Install and adequately maintain pavement markings. 2. Install oversize stop sign.
Ft. Hall Ave./Marina Rd.	1. Install and adequately maintain pavement markings. 2. Construct grade-separated bicycle/pedestrian crossing.

Location	Improvement
SH-39 – Segment 1 Idaho St. (American Falls) – N. Pleasant Valley Rd.	
Short-Range Improvements	
Lamb-Weston Rd. to N. Pleasant Valley Rd.	Widen shoulders.
Lamb-Weston Rd.	1. Remove curb and sidewalk on northbound intersection approach; rebuild curve to larger radius. 2. Change intersection control so that westbound left-turning vehicles required to stop rather than eastbound right-turning vehicles.
SH-39 – Segment 2 Sage Rd. – US-26	
Short-Range Improvements	
Liberty Rd.	Realign intersection.
Rockford West Rd. to North of Hilltop Rd.	Modify local access connections.
Wilson Rd.	1. Install flasher. 2. Modify access connections to property on northwest corner of intersection.
Taylor Rd., Moreland Rd.	Add left-turn and/or right-turn lanes.
Center St. (Riverside)	1. Construct sidewalks near SH-39/Center St. intersection. 2. Install pedestrian crossing.
Center St., Clark Rd., Trego Rd., Thomas Rd., Bishop Dr., and Bridge St.	Add left-turn and/or right-turn lanes.
Long-Range Improvements	
Liberty Rd., Thomas Rd./Scott Rd., Center St.	Add right-turn lanes.
Bridge St.	1. Install traffic signal. 2. Add northbound and southbound left-turn lanes.

The recommended improvements are an important element of the corridor plan to achieve maximum efficiency and effectiveness for future corridor uses. Another important element for achieving this goal not related to physical improvements is the establishment of access management strategies for certain portions of the corridors. The establishment

of and adherence to sound access management strategies can minimize the need for costly future improvements, while preserving the primary function of the corridors.

The findings from the transportation and land use analyses indicated that access management measures would be the most beneficial along US-26 and along SH-39 between Pine Rd. and US-26, where most of the existing access problems are concentrated. Without access management measures, these deficiencies will likely worsen in the future as development expands and traffic volumes increase. Measures to address existing access deficiencies in these areas may include turn lanes, shoulder bypasses, acceleration/deceleration lanes, consolidation of accesses, and reconstruction, relocation, or closure of driveways. Measures to ensure adequate access for future development may include specific development requirements, elimination of left-turn ingress and egress at driveways, provision of alternative access roads, and construction of frontage roads.

Decisions about which access management measures should be used to address existing and future access needs within these areas and the specific locations where they should be applied should be made within an access management plan.

Findings

Existing Transportation Conditions Analysis

The identification of existing transportation conditions involved the preparation of an inventory of transportation system characteristics and the determination of existing deficiencies. The term "deficiency" refers to a transportation condition that does not meet ITD standards and/or limits the safe and efficient use of the transportation system. For the highway system, deficiencies were broken down by the categories of level of service (LOS), traffic operations, safety, and geometrics.

To identify existing roadway LOS, an analysis was performed for both roadway segments and intersections. The only existing deficiencies found for roadway segments were along US-26 between Parks Rd./Porterville Rd. and the beginning of the existing four-lane divided section and in the south corridor area along SH-39 between Lamb-Weston Rd. and S. Pleasant Valley Rd. The intersection LOS analysis indicated that the only existing deficiencies are at US-26/Groveland Rd. and at SH-39/Bridge St.

Traffic operations deficiencies were identified for two-lane segments where there are inadequate passing opportunities and intersections where turn lanes are needed. These deficiencies exist for the same segments having LOS deficiencies. For intersections, right-turn lane deficiencies exist at over half of the locations analyzed along US-26. Along SH-39 within the north corridor area, turn lane deficiencies exist at most of the

intersections between Rockford and US-26. Within the south corridor area, left-turn and/or right-turn lanes are needed at several intersections.

Safety conditions were analyzed for both roadway segments and intersections. Based on ITD's High Accident Location (HAL) system, there are no high accident segments or intersections along US-26. There are two short high-accident segments located along SH-39, one near Rockford and the other to the east of Thomas Rd. Two high-accident intersections were identified in the north corridor area at SH-39/Wilson Rd. and SH-39/Thomas Rd. and one in the south corridor area at Ft. Hall Ave./Marina Rd..

Accident rates were also calculated. Rates for all of the segments and intersections along US-26 fall below the statewide averages, with the exception of the Parks Rd./Porterville Rd. and Groveland Rd. intersections, which are slightly above average. Accident rates are also somewhat higher than average for all of the segments along SH-39 between Rockford West Rd. and Thomas Rd. in the north corridor area and at nine of the intersections. In the south corridor area, the only locations with higher-than-average rates are the segment between Center Pleasant Valley Rd. and N. Pleasant Valley Rd. and the Ft. Hall Ave./Marina Rd. intersection.

Geometric deficiencies for roadway segments were identified by comparing existing lane, roadway, and shoulder widths to ITD standards. Lane and roadway widths exceed the standards for all segments along both US-26 and SH-39. The only shoulder width deficiency identified was for the multi-lane segment of SH-39 in American Falls between Idaho St. and Lamb-Weston Rd., where curbs and sidewalks are provided rather than shoulders.

Comparison of existing bridge widths to ITD standards indicated that both the Danskin Canal and Trego Canal bridges on US-26 have inadequate widths.

Intersection geometrics were analyzed with regard to stopping and intersection sight distances and the widths and approach grades of the minor intersecting roads. No sight distance deficiencies were identified along US-26, however on SH-39 there are two deficient locations, one a private driveway near Hoff Rd. and the other at Bishop Dr. Intersection sight distance deficiencies were also found at these locations, as well as the intersections of SH-39/S. Pleasant Valley Rd. and US-26/Groveland Rd. Roadway width and approach grade deficiencies exist for the minor roads at several intersections.

ITD's policy with regard to bicycle facilities states that these facilities should be considered for inclusion in projects in or adjacent to urbanized or recreational areas. Based on this policy, as well as bicycle count data and observed conditions, there does not appear to be an immediate need for bicycle facilities along US-26 or SH-39 within the north or south corridor areas.

ITD's policy for the construction of pedestrian facilities states that pedestrian paths should be considered in suburban and rural areas when a need is shown. Accordingly, there may be a need for pedestrian facilities near the intersection of SH-39/Center St. in Riverside, where there is nearby residential development and a school, as well as commercial development along SH-39. Within other areas along SH-39 and US-26, development densities are not yet high enough to warrant the construction of pedestrian facilities.

No existing deficiencies were identified for other transportation modes.

Future Transportation Conditions Analysis

Travel demand forecasts were required for the determination of future transportation system needs along the SH-39 and US-26 corridors. Based on an assessment of potential future growth within the north and south corridor areas, a trendline forecasting method was used to estimate future volumes. This method is appropriate when future growth rates are expected to be similar to historical rates, and is most frequently used in areas with relatively low growth rates. Due to the higher growth potential within the north corridor area, a second forecasting method incorporating future land use estimates was used to verify that the trendline forecasts would adequately reflect future development within the area.

Following the development of the traffic forecasts, it was decided that a future year transportation system needs analysis for the south corridor area would not be necessary. This was based on:

- The relatively low growth in development and employment that is anticipated over the forecast period;
- The low to moderate future year traffic volumes expected along SH-39; and
- The likelihood that the additional future year traffic volumes in this area will not result in significantly increased transportation system needs, beyond what was identified for existing conditions.

The 2025 traffic forecasts were used to perform a future LOS analysis for a "No-Build" network scenario within the north corridor area following the same methodologies described for the existing conditions analysis. For US-26, the analysis indicated a degradation in LOS from "C" to "D" for the segments between Moreland Rd. and Parks Rd./Porterville Rd. and SH-39 and the I-15 northbound ramps, which will result in LOS deficiencies. Future intersection LOS will also be degraded by one LOS letter at over half of the intersections analyzed along US-26. This will result in future LOS deficiencies at the following intersections:

- Parks Rd./Porterville Rd. (LOS "E")
- Clark Rd. (LOS "D")
- Bond Rd. (LOS "D")
- Pioneer Rd. (LOS "D")
- West Collins Siding Rd. (LOS "D")
- Groveland Rd. (LOS "E")

Along SH-39, the future roadway segment LOS will remain the same as for existing conditions except for the segments between Liberty Rd. and Pine Rd. and Thomas Rd. and Bishop Rd. (westbound direction only), where the LOS will decrease from "B" to "C". For the Liberty Rd. – Pine Rd. segment, this will result in a LOS deficiency. Most of the intersections between Sage Rd. and Liberty Rd. will remain at their existing levels of service. The only intersection that will operate below the standard is SH-39/Liberty Rd. (LOS "C"). Between Pine Rd. and US-26, the intersection LOS will generally drop by one LOS letter, with most intersections operating at LOS "B" or LOS "C". The only exception to this is the SH-39/Bridge St. intersection, where the LOS will decrease from "E" to "F".

With regard to future traffic operations, the "percent time spent following" criterion used in the LOS analysis indicated that future traffic operations will be deficient along US-26 between Moreland Rd. and the beginning of the four-lane divided section and along SH-39 between Liberty Rd. and Pine Rd. In addition to the existing turn lane deficiencies, future left-turn and/or right-turn lane deficiencies will occur at several intersections along US-26 and SH-39.

Future safety deficiencies were not analyzed because there is no reliable method for forecasting safety conditions.

There will be no geometric deficiencies for roadway segments along US-26 or SH-39 in the north corridor area by 2025. Similarly, there will be no bridge width deficiencies other than the existing deficiencies at the Danskin Canal and Trego Canal bridges on US-26. Because intersection and stopping sight distance deficiencies are based on speed and approach grade only and do not reflect traffic volume, the same geometric deficiencies identified for intersections in the existing conditions analysis would apply for future conditions. Additional roadway width and approach grade deficiencies will occur for the minor roads at several intersections along US-26 and SH-39 in the future.

In accordance with ITD policy, the specific location and configuration of future bicycle facilities within the corridor areas must be determined as development details become known. Similarly, future pedestrian facility needs will be related to the specific location of future attractors, such as retail development or recreational facilities, and the proximity

of surrounding residential development. Where attractors and residential development of sufficient size are located within ¼ mile of one another, additional pedestrian facilities will be required.

No future deficiencies were identified for the other transportation modes.

Land Use and Environmental Conditions

Within the north corridor area, the Bingham County Comprehensive Plan establishes the base land use zoning. Generally, the zoning in the immediate vicinity of US-26 and SH-39 is residential, commercial, and industrial. Beyond this area, the land use is dominated by farmland. Along US-26, the land use along the south/west side of the highway is primarily industrial and dominated by large agricultural processing uses – Non Pareil Corporation, Basic American Foods, General Mills and the Bingham Co-op. The north/east side of the highway is developed with a mix of small scale commercial and industrial uses. Beyond the industrial/commercial area, the land use changes to a mix of farms and rural residential uses.

Along SH-39, the current land use from the US-26 junction to Bishop Dr. is a mix of small scale industrial and commercial uses. Rural residential and farm uses dominate the highway corridor from Bishop Dr. to Riverside. Riverside is a small community commercial center. Beyond Riverside, the corridor is a mix of rural residential and small farms. Snake River High School and Snake River Junior High School are located on the north side of the highway just west of Wilson Rd.. To the west, there are more farms with fewer subdivisions. Rockford and Liberty are two small communities along the highway with a mix of small-scale commercial and industrial uses. The major industrial use in the area is Wada Farms, a large fresh pack potato processing plant located near Willow Rd. Outside of Rockford and Liberty, nearly all of the land use is large farms.

In addition to the local land uses, the north corridor area is influenced by externally generated traffic. The City of Blackfoot anchors the eastern end of the north corridor area, starting at the I-15 interchange. It is located midway between Idaho Falls (27 miles to the north) and Pocatello (25 miles to the south). With a population of 10,400, Blackfoot serves as the county seat for Bingham County and is the major commercial and employment center for the county.

US-26 serves as a major commuter route between I-15 and the Idaho National Laboratory (INL, formerly called INEEL), located roughly 40 miles to the north and west of Blackfoot. The INL is a federal Department of Energy national laboratory with approximately 2,500 employees. In addition, the Idaho Completion Project is an on-going cleanup program at the laboratory employing another 2,600 workers that is expected to continue until 2012.

Within the south corridor area, the major land use features are the Pleasant Valley area, American Falls Reservoir, and the City of American Falls. The Pleasant Valley area consists mainly of large farms, with a few rural residential homes and isolated small-scale commercial uses. The ConAgra potato processing plant is located west of the corridor off of Lamb Weston Rd. The American Falls Dam and Reservoir are owned and operated by the Bureau of Reclamation. Built primarily as a water storage reservoir for irrigation, it also provides electric power and flood control protection. It is a popular recreational area with a number of parks and boat ramps to provide access. The City of American Falls is located at the southern end of SH-39 near I-86, 25 miles west of Pocatello. With a population of roughly 4,100, it is the major commercial center within Power County and serves as the county seat. Transfer and distribution facilities for the Union Pacific railroad are located just to the south of I-86B/SH-39 in American Falls.

As mentioned above, a 2025 forecast of future housing units and employment was prepared for the north corridor area for the purpose of verifying the trendline traffic forecasts. For the housing unit forecast, Bingham County building permit records were reviewed to identify new housing units for this time period and assign them to individual subareas along the US-26 and SH-39 corridors. A five-year average of 52.4 new housing units per year was calculated and used to project a total of 1,048 additional units by 2025. The new housing units were allocated to the subareas based on the proportional shares of the 2000-2004 growth.

The employment forecast was based on Idaho Department of Commerce and Labor data from the fourth quarter of 2004. Businesses were sorted by category and location. The 2004 employment data provided the basis for calculating background growth using a conservative 0.5% average annual growth rate. The incremental employment was then added to the base year employment for the same category and in the same location. An exception to this method was the treatment of the large potato processors in the area. Future employment for this sector is not expected to grow significantly, given that the amount of farmland in production is stable. Also, specific employment assumptions were made for the anticipated industrial development in the US-26 corridor and the small-scale retail development that will accompany future residential growth.

In the south corridor area, the character of existing land uses along SH-39 within the Pleasant Valley area suggests that a few additional houses or businesses may locate along the corridor, but that a significant amount of new development impacting the highway is not likely. Also, based on stakeholder interviews with potato processors, future year employment levels within this industry are not expected to see significant growth.

The City of American Falls anticipates some new development on the east side of the SH-39 Bypass. Based on interviews with city planners, this will include small-scale retail development immediately adjacent to the Fort Hall Ave./Marina Rd. and Hillcrest Rd. intersections, as well as 100+ residential lots further to the east.

The review of environmental conditions included the development of a socioeconomic profile and an environmental scan. The socioeconomic profile was based on the 2000 Census, and includes information on population, race and gender, households and housing units, and income and employment characteristics.

From 1990 to 2000, population growth in Power and Bingham counties has been slower than the statewide growth. Growth in the Moreland community has been higher than in the other corridor areas.

The employment levels for communities along the corridor are comparable to the statewide rates, except for Moreland, which has a higher labor force participation rate and higher unemployment rate. Compared to statewide employment averages, the corridor communities have lower levels of employment in management and professional, service, and sales occupations and higher levels in farming and production, which can be attributed to the predominance of agriculture and food processing within the study area.

All of the corridor communities except Moreland have median household incomes that are less than the statewide median ($37,572), primarily because of lower proportion of households in the upper income brackets ($75,000+).

The purpose of the environmental scan was to characterize existing environmental conditions and determine whether there are significant environmental resources that could influence transportation improvement options considered as part of the corridor plan.

Water is an important resource for Bingham and Power counties. Most of the agriculture depends on irrigation water from the Snake River and deep wells. Diversions out of the Snake River for irrigation are carried through a system of canals. The diversions begin in early May, and end approximately in late September.

Both the US-26 and SH-39 corridors lie within the East Snake River Plain Aquifer, a Sole Source Aquifer. The area northwest of the Snake River is not within a ground water management area. The southeast side of the Snake River is within the American Falls Ground Water Management Area.

Field reconnaissance did not identify extensive areas of wetlands. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) identifies a few isolated wetlands along the corridors. The wetland functions and values that could be impacted by highway improvement projects within the corridor areas include: habitat for fish and wildlife, groundwater discharge, flood storage, shoreline anchoring and dissipation of erosive forces, nutrient retention, and sediment trapping.

The Idaho Conservation Data Center's (CDC) database was searched for sensitive species, including those that are federally listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and other species afforded special protection status by any federal agency or the State of Idaho. Idaho Department of Fish and Game staff were consulted regarding wildlife, birds and fish habitat, as well as species of concern. Fish habitat in the corridor areas is limited to the Snake River and the American Falls Reservoir. The Snake River flows through a mixed cottonwood riparian area. Water is diverted to irrigation canals at numerous points. Hatchery rainbow trout comprise the majority of the fish in the river. Large wild rainbow trout, brown trout, and cutthroat trout are also found in this reach. The American Falls Reservoir covers 58,078 surface acres and has a usable storage of 1,671,300 acre-feet. It is a popular fishing reservoir, with rainbow trout, smallmouth bass, and yellow perch.

Special status species include state and federal designated threatened and endangered species and species of special concern. A total of 49 special status species were identified for Bingham and Power Counties.

The environmental scan for historical, architectural and archaeological resources consisted of both records research and field reconnaissance to provide preliminary identification of potential resources along the US-26 and SH-39 corridors. There are no sites along the corridors listed on the National Register of Historic Places. However, some of the canal bridges are more than 50 years old, and therefore, potentially eligible for listing on the National Register. Representatives from the Shoshone-Bannock tribe did not identify any specific cultural resource locations along the highway corridors, but did indicate that there is the potential for cultural resources in this area.

Identification of potential hazardous or environmentally contaminated sites along the US-26 and SH-39 corridors consisted of a review of public records to identify fuel stations, pipelines, and industrial uses that have the potential to use, store, or generate hazardous materials as part of their on-going operations. The review identified several sites with leaking underground storage tanks along US-26 and SH-39.